

Mary Mary is pleased to present a solo exhibition of new work by New York-based Alan Reid, his second at the gallery, presenting a series of new paintings and a large-scale, bas-relief mural. The 20-metre mural, spanning three walls of the gallery, explores the artist's fascination with surface appliqué and its incongruent, provocative relation to a support ground.

For this exhibition, Reid has withdrawn the female protagonist his exhibitions to date have centered around. 'An Absent Monument' looks at the absence of Reid's female character, continuing past themes of camouflage, of social masks and substitutions, of chameleons, absences and of being incognito.

The mural, 'La Notte (1961)', titled after Michelangelo Antonioni's film depicting a psychologically alienated bourgeois couple, is designed around a large-scale patterned print. The pattern, columns of giraffe's spots, is used variously as a tableau, stage set and a screen upon which Reid can add a series of suggestive objects: wooden moustaches, a tea set, croissants, a mask, shells, vases, etc. In addition to the sculptures and having commissioned fashion designer Moire Conroy to design clothing for the 'absent character' within the exhibition, several works have articles of clothing strewn on them, as if we have become privy to the discarding of her clothes.

Reid's interest in the idea of private versus public selves, and the social masks we wear is here evidenced in the giraffe pattern, a disguise extended to an absurd end, exposing giraffes as an unfortunate candidate for camouflage – big ridiculous animals trying to blend in with their surroundings. In 'La Notte (1961)', giraffe camouflage is used simultaneously to perform the role of room, of setting, and to act as character. The column, a form evoking architecture, text (a magazine column), and biology (giraffe's neck) in this setting forms an indeterminate foundation upon which the artist can layer meanings.

Alongside 'La Notte (1961)', Reid presents new paintings taking the theme of an absent subject as a conceptual starting point. The paintings, employing silhouettes of Henry Moore sculptures, are all non-functional clocks – the face of a stopped clock, a stand-in for an absent face.

The paintings here pursue a line of thinking incorporating modernist art history, painting's echo in culture, modes of desire and the linguistic instability of painting. Reid's personal and analytic iconography commandeers art-historical motifs, subverting and employing them in varying degrees. His references are absurd, but also speak to aspects of polite society, hospitality, and the way humans inevitably read and misunderstand each other. The work delves into apparent contradictions,

seeking to continuously add elements, whether sculptural or functional, figural or abstract, avoiding categorization, with each addition to the work seeking to subvert easy explanation.

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